

# Chehalis Basin Local Actions Program • Implementation Advisory Group

## MEETING 2 SUMMARY

**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020

**Time:** 1:00 – 5:00 PM PST

**Location:** Zoom online meeting

### Purpose of Meeting

- Review Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) meeting 1 feedback, work plan, and schedule.
- Revisit land use recommendations/results of surveys/conversations with local governments to understand if recommendations to limit development in potentially flood prone areas are sufficient.
- Preview information from Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on revised estimate of future floodplain (i.e., 100-year flood in 2080), including structures at risk and summarize areas that are most significant.
- Introduce research on regional/national programs using structure relocation, acquisition, and retrofits for flood damage reduction.

### Meeting Notes

These meeting notes are intended to be a public record of key points, questions, and discussion topics raised during the meeting. They are not intended to be transcripts. The meeting was recorded on Zoom.

### IAG Meeting 1 Feedback, Work Plan, and Schedule

Jim Kramer (meeting facilitator) summarized feedback on the IAG Meeting 1 process and information provided. In general, IAG participants appreciate interactive meeting approaches. The IAG schedule and general work plan are captured in the table below.

IAG Meeting	Date	Meeting Topics
<b>Meeting 3</b>	Mon., Jan. 11, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Panel discussion on buyout/relocation programs</li><li>• Future floodplain land use implications and assumptions</li><li>• Preview information from TAG</li></ul>
<b>Meeting 4</b>	Wed., Jan. 13, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow up discussion on Meeting 3 topics</li><li>• Erosion issues</li></ul>
<b>Meeting 5</b>	Thu., Jan. 21, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow up discussion on Meeting 4 topics</li></ul>
<b>Meeting 6</b>	Thu., Feb. 11, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow up discussion on Meeting 5 topics</li><li>• Implementation</li></ul>
<b>Meeting 7</b>	Mon., March 22, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IAG information and the Chehalis Basin Board</li></ul>
<b>Meeting 8 (may be with the Technical Advisory Group)</b>	TBD in March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report back on the Board's discussions and next steps</li></ul>

## **Floodplain Management Land Use Recommendations and Implications**

The IAG continued its discussion from Meeting 1 about land use recommendations and the survey results and conversations with local governments. Jim Kramer reviewed the information from the *Summary of Tribal and Local Jurisdiction Implementation of Floodplain Land Use Recommendations* memorandum (December 8, 2020), including the three discussion questions for the IAG:

1. Are the existing recommendations to manage development in potentially flood-prone areas sufficient relative to achieving the Chehalis Basin Board approved outcome for the Local Actions Program regarding preventing future at-risk development? Are there other measures or actions that should be considered to accomplish the Local Actions Program outcome?
2. Are there additional land use and floodplain management recommendations that should be considered?
3. Do you agree with the land use recommendations identified as being most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program? These recommendations (defined in the memo sent to IAG members before the meeting) included:
  - Flood of record
  - Critical facilities
  - Subdivision set asides
  - Low density zoning
  - Zero-rise policy
  - Placement of wastewater and water supply infrastructure

IAG participants responded to an anonymous poll about the relevance of different recommendations before dividing into three breakout groups to discuss the questions above (see Appendix A for poll questions). The IAG regrouped after the breakout groups to share discussion takeaways, which included:

- There were several comments asking for more clarity around the recommendations and when they would apply.
  - In response to a question, OCB staff clarified that “low density” in the recommendations referred to 1 unit per 5 acres.
  - Using common standards across jurisdictions for different land use categories will be important.
- One group noted that it could be useful to have case studies of how the land use recommendations had been implemented.
- Participants also commented that it was difficult to answer the poll questions since the recommendations could be relevant but not important or vice versa. For example, subdivision requirements are not relevant in Grays Harbor County, and all of Hoquiam is in the floodplain.
- It is important to distinguish between recommendations that are relevant for urban vs. rural areas and consider their differing implications (e.g., subdivision requirements are not applicable to urban areas; the requirements for water/wastewater infrastructure could be counterproductive to other objectives in urban areas).
- The subdivision requirements apply to future divisions of land but preventing development in floodplains is an issue of existing lots. It could be useful to consider other measures, such as removing development rights (such as through acquisition or transfers) and/or acquiring lots that would otherwise be developed.
- One implication to consider is how the land use requirements relate to local and statewide interests in affordable housing.

- Some local governments expressed concern about the requirement for participating in the community rating system program, given the low return on investment and amount of staff time needed to support participation.
- Zero rise and compensatory storage measures do not necessarily create as much meaningful benefit for communities as they are intended to do. In addition, they can be a challenge for communities to implement on top of other requirements.
  - The analysis for zero rise is done at a project level and can be a burden for municipalities, especially when the analysis does not result in meaningful changes to the project. The value of the analysis would be greater if it were done proactively and as a cumulative analysis; however, care should be taken not to place too much burden on any one project for accommodating the effects of other development.
  - The way that compensatory storage requirements are implemented can make them less effective. The configuration of projects (e.g., whether linear along highways, relation to “pinch points,” etc.) matters when considering compensatory storage.
  - It could be more valuable in many cases to invest resources in flood-damage mitigation or prevention projects, rather than finding qualifying places for compensatory storage that may not provide the same flood mitigation benefits.
- The flood of record recommendation can be problematic when there are different floods of record for the same general area.
- Incentives could be useful to keep areas as “working lands”—this could be a way to put a positive spin on zoning requirements.
- Local jurisdictions often do not have the staff support to make these recommendations happen, so there is a need for regional support.
- For development that relates to wells, it is important to consider the effects on streams and the relationship to the Aquatic Species Restoration Program efforts. In addition, if there are concerns about drilling wells, the Washington State Department of Ecology should be consulted. Often wells are drilled on properties before local governments are involved.
- One participant noted appreciation that local jurisdictions seemed to be taking the floodplain land use recommendations more seriously than in the past.

## Current and Future Floodplain Estimates

Jim Kramer reviewed the modeled 100-year 2080 floodplain depths compared to current floodplain depths, as described in the *Hydrologic and Hydraulic Modeling of the 2080 100-year Floodplain* memorandum (December 9, 2020). The previous “buildout” analysis conducted focused on the mainstem of the Chehalis and indicated that there were significant numbers of undeveloped and developed lots in the modeled floodplain (the full buildout analysis conducted is available in [Appendix L](#) of the environmental impact statement). The range in flood depths for the modeled 100-year floodplain in 2080 (50% increase) ranged from less than 1 foot to over 7 feet.

The IAG responded to the question, “What are the potential implications of managing to the future 2080 100-year floodplain?” in Jamboard ([link to Jamboard](#) with responses; stars indicate that multiple IAG members agreed with the comment). Discussion topics and themes included:

- There are many ways to manage to the floodplain. If regulations were applied across the entire area, it could have big political implications (e.g., much of Centralia East of I-5 will be floodplain even though it is a city). It may be appropriate to have different management strategies for core

vs. secondary or buffer areas. For example, perhaps the expansion areas could use more flexible, incentive-based approaches.

- In response to this discussion, OCB staff noted there were not many locations where the floodplain is predicted to expand geographically. In many cases, the implication of the future 100-year floodplain is deeper floodwaters (e.g., 4-5 feet deeper).
- There is a difference between managing to future floodplain (e.g., incorporating predicted climate change impacts into infrastructure planning) and regulating to it (e.g., zoning based on the future floodplain, higher freeboard requirements).
- Comprehensive plans often incorporate climate change planning. Thurston County will soon be engaged in a regional planning process on climate change and will coordinate with local jurisdictions around it.
- There are still a lot of very old flood maps in use in the Chehalis Basin; they are generally outside of the mainstem. The flood maps are the regulatory standard.
  - Municipalities can adopt a higher standard, like the flood of record, but it is not required and can be politically challenging to regulate beyond the FEMA standard.
  - In many cases the information from FEMA maps may not be as accurate as other information available locally based on surveying and modeling.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works with state agencies to identify priorities for updating maps, but there is no set schedule for updating individual maps. Communities may also proactively approach FEMA to update the maps, often through a cooperative grant.
  - Grays Harbor County recently updated its flood maps, which are now available in a digital format online, and submitted those to FEMA. FEMA supported the open house workshops for that effort. The outreach to all affected by the updates was extensive.
- People's reactions to managing to a different floodplain could vary. Examples included:
  - The savings from flood insurance could encourage people to build outside of the floodplain.
  - The costs of floodproofing will rise, and some people may forego investing in it at all.
  - Property owners for large properties may need to work with surveyors to identify more advantageous places to build on a property.
  - The combination of shoreline and flood management regulations is likely to keep pushing homes out further from rivers.
- Effort now to manage for the future floodplain could save resources later, although the public may be less willing to follow guidelines based on modeled (and uncertain) future conditions.

## **Community Buyout and Relocation Programs**

Shelby Thomas (Ross Strategic) provided a summary of the OCB team's research on other communities dealing with flooding that have used voluntary property acquisition (buyout) programs and, in some cases, programs to intentionally relocate and rebuild communities (relocation) after acquisition. She summarized key characteristics of these programs, including the number of properties bought out and/or moved, implementation stage, and funding, as well as future research planned. The communities included Charlotte-Mecklenberg County, North Carolina; Hamilton, Washington; Harris County, Texas; Johnson Creek, Oregon; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Valmeyer, Illinois. IAG discussed the following questions in breakout groups and in the full group session:

- What else would you like to know about these efforts and others?

- What are your initial thoughts on how and where buyout and/or relocation approaches best apply in the Basin?

IAG members suggested researching the following *additional communities*:

- Napa Valley, California
- New Jersey Blue Acres Program
- Previous efforts in the basin, including Centralia’s buyout program and the early action reach program through the Aquatic Species Restoration Program

Key *areas of interest for further exploration for the programs* (through desk and interview research and/or the upcoming panel discussion) included the following:

- Community characteristics and motivations:
  - Demographics for the communities
  - What makes it worthwhile for communities to participate in these programs?
  - How did the buyout conversations compare for different types of property owners (e.g., large vs. small businesses)?
  - For full community relocation programs like Hamilton, what causes communities to move in this direction?
- Impacts of buyouts and relocations:
  - Stories capturing the human element of impacts of the programs (e.g., community vibrancy)
  - What happened to the people who moved? How were they affected? How do you support those communities (e.g., low income)?
  - Effects/implications for specific property types:
    - Historic structures
    - How are rental properties handled? What are the implications for tenants and low-income housing?
- Funding and revenue topics, including:
  - Funding sources and mechanisms, including non-traditional/creative funding sources and how to leverage and be competitive with FEMA and other funding sources
  - Whether economic analyses have been conducted on who is eligible to benefit from the programs and long-term impacts or cost-benefit analyses
- Scale of the program (e.g., municipality, basin, or watershed scale)
- How did the buyout/relocation programs relate to major infrastructure, such as highways? For areas with dams, how did communities perceive of the programs in the context of the dams?
- Implementation timeline outlining the time from concept to implementation (Members were interested to know whether this timeline differed between proactive and reactive programs.)
- Long-term management responsibilities and adjustments:
  - What institution has responsibility for demolition and long-term maintenance of properties after the buyouts?
  - Are programs adapting their approaches over time to account for climate change?

Comments and observations about *where and in what cases buyout and/or relocation programs could be applicable* in the Chehalis River Basin included:

- Consider prioritizing relief for flood damage as well as erosion hazard areas.
- Focus the program based on depth of estimated impacts from future flooding.

- Specific geographic areas mentioned: major rivers/stream corridors and the Satsop River, which has high risk of flood damage.
- Think about what you're paying for with buyout/relocation programs: are you buying out an RV Park or primary residences? It can be useful to consider efforts that prioritize multiple benefits.
- Given the funding and scale of programs that would be required for the most densely populated areas in the floodplain, more structural solutions might be better than buyout/relocation programs. Rather, focusing on less dense areas that are within sight of rivers might be a more logical connection for people to make.
  - The City of Centralia did not have much success with its past willing seller program; property owners were very reluctant to participate in a voluntary buyout program and felt very strong ties to their land.
- It's important to also consider where people would move to. Centralia has several thousand acres in the urban growth boundary that is outside the floodplain, but it currently does not have the infrastructure to support that development.

## Next Steps and Summary of Follow-Up Actions

The next Implementation Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 11, 2021, at 9:00 AM PST. Below is a summary of follow-up actions identified during the meeting:

- The OCB team will send out a request for availability to schedule a March meeting for the IAG or possibly a joint meeting with the Technical Advisory Group.
- The OCB team will check to see whether there are instances of climate change models being used to determine future floodplains rather than just the flood of record.

## Appendix A: Poll Questions

1. Are the existing recommendations to manage development in potentially flood-prone areas sufficient relative to achieving the Board outcome regarding preventing future at-risk development?
2. Flood of record: Do you believe the flood of record recommendation is one of the most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program?
3. Critical facilities: Do you believe the critical facilities recommendation is one of the most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program?
4. Subdivision set asides: Do you believe the subdivision set asides recommendation is one of the most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program?
5. Low density zoning: Do you believe the low-density zoning recommendation is one of the most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program?
6. Zero rise policy: Do you believe the zero-rise policy recommendation is one of the most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program?
7. Design of wastewater and water supply infrastructure: Do you believe the design of wastewater and water supply infrastructure recommendation is one of the most important and relevant to the Local Actions Program?